

This past October, the night before my presentation for the Family Medicine clerkship, I received the news that I had missed the Step 1 by one point. In spite of this devastating news, I still managed to give a presentation that generated very good feedback. I was able to do this because the past year had taught me how to put aside emotions and focus on my job. The high pass I earned was anticlimactic, but the wonderful experience that working in the Williamsbridge clinic gave me fuels my constant drive to succeed in becoming a great doctor.

It is with trepidation that I venture to discuss the events that led to my failures in the year 2002/2003. A medical student is not afforded the luxury of excuses; he is expected to succeed. I place the brunt of responsibility for not rising to these demands upon my own shoulders. I believe in integrity and consistency and just as I accept the credit for my accomplishments, so too I step up to the plate and willingly accept the constructive criticism of my superiors and my peers.

I welcome this committee to examine with meticulous detail my case. Just as AECOM has invested in me an invaluable education and painstakingly molded the form of a future doctor, so too I will utilize our meeting as a contribution to the final product of who I will be as a doctor. Our experiences mold who we are and there is no one that I would wish more than yourselves, this distinguished committee, to be the kiln that gives a soft malleable mold the strength, resilience and maturity to face the challenges of a medical doctor; to live up to the great name that Albert Einstein College of Medicine stands for.

It is incumbent upon me to revisit the events from the time of my acceptance into this renowned institution up until the first time that I appeared before this Board a year and a half ago. A review of past events will assist in the integration of all the facts into a big picture. Once the picture is clear, it is easier to recognize what needs to be corrected so that the errors of the past will not be repeated. September 2002 was a tumultuous time that was not the ideal atmosphere one would wish upon any beginner medical student. My grandmother suffered a debilitating stroke that left her left side paralyzed. My mother took a leave of absence from work to move in with my grandmother, my parents hired a full time nurse, and I transferred my residence from Einstein to Brooklyn to offer weekends and some nights to her care. Of all her family I am my grandma's favorite and my presence was a light in her eyes every Saturday. The toll that this extracted from my test preparation was enormous.

After a number of months, while my grandmother was thankfully on her road to recovery, a new and exciting time was introduced into my life; I began the courtship of my future wife. The drain on my study time and the emotional distraction took a terrible toll on my concentration, affected my studying and negatively impacted my test scores. When I focused, I mustered energy and revealed my potential; a high pass anatomy score and an MCFM score of 75.9, an 80.9, and 86.2 on two other MCFM exams, a 96 on a renal makeup, and an 89.2 on pharmacology.

A student incapable of the mastery that AECOM demands could not have achieved those scores. In fact it was these very successes that goaded me on to believe that I would restore the Michael Tyberg that I had always known and that my ambitions and goals would be realized. Everybody is born with innate talents and I always prided myself on using my intellect and drive to excel; I was always an outstanding student; the dean of students at Touro College, my alma mater, made me the poster boy of Touro College as he proudly circulated my picture in international newspapers.

The pattern of successes and failures of 2002/2003 reflect a student struggling with a completely new set of circumstances that introduced failure when previously there had only been success. When the year came to a close I was left with a number of failures and one of them, the

biochemistry course, had to be repeated. Dr. David emphatically suggested that I decelerate and I agreed. I welcomed deceleration as a chance to enable my wife and I to live in Brooklyn for the first year of our marriage while my wife completed her Bachelors of Psychology at Brooklyn College. Her job was in Brooklyn as well and we felt confident that with this arrangement and her support I would be able to fulfill my duties as a student.

In truth the merit of this plan of action was substantial and there was marked improvement in my handle of the material. The grades of that year of 2003/2004 reflect that; the 67.8 of protein metabolism of the previous year was turned into an 88.1 when it was repeated, a 79 in GI, and a 78.8 in endocrine. In fact the ratio of passes to failures in the year 2002/2003 of tests taken was 2:1 with 5 out of the 15 passes as a low pass. Contrast this to the year of 2003/2004 with a ratio of 7:1 and every pass as a high pass. It is not a coincidence that the first exam given just a couple of weeks after I was married was the only one that I failed. The electrically charged emotions of two newlyweds adjusting to one another made it difficult to focus on the lectures and conferences. I think that every person in this room who has experienced marriage with its ups and downs will testify on my behalf that this is not an unusual. With foresight I withdrew from the pulmonary course to channel all my energy into the topic of carbohydrate metabolism, but without the insight lectures or the four points from conference I received a 64.9 out of a possible 96 points.

Words do not describe the regret I feel for letting my foremost priority of studying be eclipsed by personal issues. It is a common mistake that many doctors learn too late in their careers with sad results. Hence my only consolation from my string of failures is that I was taught this lesson before anyone suffered harm. I can honestly say that the ups and downs of marriage did not disappear, nor did other familial responsibilities since then. Nevertheless I balanced my responsibilities with grace and always placed my studies at AECOM on the top of my list. Since February of 2004 I have passed every exam that I have taken in AECOM. I did not allow previous failures to distract me from my focus. Nor did these setbacks ever cause me to wander from my calling of medicine. The role of a healer to my patients is who I am and that will never change.

There remains one final incident in the year 2002/2003 that I would like to clarify before we can move past the time frame of the last Board meeting; the Hematology exam. My course-load was uncomplicated with Hematology as my sole responsibility and I was sufficiently prepared to do well on the exam, as I proved on the make-up. Unfortunately I fell ill on the night before the exam and did not feel well enough to sit for the exam. Aware that I had up to two make-up exams per year, I elected not to risk a chance of failure due to a transient illness, and I opted to take a makeup. However, I did not realize that I must send in an email to be excused from the exam and I received a failing grade for not showing up. In a way this was an outgrowth of taking make-ups for failed exams in my first year; I had forgotten that the procedure is different for a missed exam. I berate myself and hold myself responsible for not becoming as familiar as I should have with the by-laws. Please do not compare this with the heinous crime of a no-show on the wards. When there are patients that depend on you there is no automatic Plan B that magically appears when you disappear. I had the privilege of completing the Family Medicine clerkship and my reliability of attendance at the Williamsbridge family practice was impeccable; on most nights I stayed well into the evening. This dependability cannot be separated from being a good student or being a good doctor. My dependability is a trait that has served me in good stead in both my personal and my academic life.

During our last meeting the members of this Board gave me the chance to prove that I would bring about a lasting change. I promised this committee that I would change my residence back to AECOM housing and so I did. I promised this committee that I would attend every lecture

and conference and I did. I promised that I would utilize every resource that AECOM had to offer and I kept my promise and sought a tutor for every single course that year. Your trust in me was not in vain because, most importantly, I promised this committee a student who would master the material above all other considerations and I came through on that promise as well.

Let us look at the facts. There were 14 examinations left to complete the basic sciences. The ratio of passes to failures was 14:0 and all the exams were high passes. There were no withdrawals or make-ups or points missed from a conference. I would like to point out that in December 2004 I started to take the regular coursework of an accelerated student; Cardiovascular Medicine, Pulmonary, and ICM. What's more is that during that time, I found out that my wife and I were expecting our first child. If I had failed an exam at this point then I would be forced to admit that I had not learned the lessons of the past and that perhaps I am not able to juggle life and all of its surprises. There is no better testament to my ability to do so than to showcase this period of time. I balanced my personal and academic responsibilities with maturity. I mastered the skills of prioritizing and of time management. I weathered the stresses of my wife's pregnancy with ease and I showed great improvement as is evidenced by the last year's solid grades.

What remains now is a discussion of the failure of the USMLE Step 1. The USMLE was a struggle for me from the outset. I had already learned that advice from fellow students about test preparation is a road fraught with danger, yet my resources were limited. There was no syllabus to rely on that the information was contained therein, there were no conferences, no tutors, and no study partners. Based on information and advice I received from other students, I selected First Aid for the Boards as my primary syllabus, so to speak, the Board Review Series as a supplement to fill out the details, and Q-Bank. I used these tools to study and I also purchased a book called 'How to prepare for the USMLE' and found some very sound advice. The same author had written a book 'How to be a successful medical student' that I read after I failed biochemistry and their good advice had helped me pass all my exams since then. In fact I gave my copy of the latter book to Dean David because I felt it had made such an impact on my study methods. My last step in preparation was to make sure that I could devote some time to my almost due wife and Dean David offered that I could start rotations on August 1st.

An old study partner of mine from college days, Chaim Brown, was in a D.O. school in Las Vegas and he expressed an interest in spending the summer studying for the USMLE with me. I thought I would benefit from an intense one-on-one study partnership than join Kaplan. However due to unforeseen circumstances Mr. Brown was unable to come to New York. By that time I was locked out of the Kaplan live lectures. Mr. Brown and I, however, still studied on the phone at night and during the day I followed an intense schedule of study and questions.

Approximately a week before my test date I took an evaluation test given by the NBME and my score was 4 points below passing. I asked myself what was missing and lecture material stood out as the most obvious. Kaplan offers online lectures and I found them to be so insightful that, after the Dean gave me an extension till September 12th to start clerkships, I spent all day listening and reviewing these lectures. The week before the exam I reviewed all of First Aid and all the lecture material. Although it seemed that this degree of added instruction of the material went well beyond 4 points, I had made a mistake. I can honestly say that the news of my failure impacted my wife as hard as it did me. Although she had just given birth to our son, Ben, nevertheless her support for my studying never wavered. For example, she would stay during the week with her family so that I would not be distracted. We both however always remained optimistic about the future because we know that the most valuable things in life are what you work hardest for.

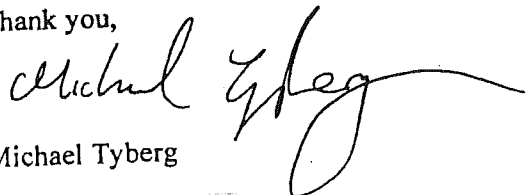
So now I stand before you with the failure of the USMLE behind me, but I also now have an experience of a different world of studying. I joined the Kaplan live lecture course and immersed myself in an intense schedule of 9 hours of lecture time with syllabi. Finding a study partner was easy. The first person that I called from their bulletin board, Agatha Mann, became my study partner every night after lectures. We also listen to the lectures on video for a second time. I see the results in how my Q-Bank score has increased and in how my grasp of the knowledge has undergone an integration that is reminiscent of the AECOM courses I took in 2004/2005.

It should also be considered that the USMLE exam is unique in its own right. The material that is being tested stretches across multiple disciplines, delves into each of them richly, and integrates them into one science. Questions are not the classic one step associations I was accustomed to; three and sometimes four steps are required. Also the time factor, which was never an issue in an exam in Einstein, played a role. I submit to you that I what I am also guilty of is underestimating this examination. Part of what Kaplan trained me to do is to look and understand how the questions and multiple-choice answers are written and how to answer them directly. Hindsight is 20/20 and I see now with the right tools I could have conquered this challenge and I did not. It is those words "I could have" that haunt me and give me the impetus to face this challenge again and surmount it.

Lastly I would like to share with this Board my plan for future success. It is a simple one: to repeat the achievements of the past. I will spend a month of study preparing for the shelf examination before I even start each of the clerkships. I will utilize lectures at Kaplan as well as study partners and Q-Bank. Not only will this mean that my free time during the rotation will be spent reviewing, but the quality of my patient care will be enhanced as well. The clerkships are a tough challenge, but I recognize the need for me to put in the extra time and effort so that I may succeed in them as well.

Ladies and Gentleman of the Board, each of you views being a doctor as something intrinsic to the very fabric of your being. In the same spirit, I mentioned earlier that the role of a healer to my patients is who I am and that can never change. Esteemed members of the Board, I am humbled to come before you today to solicit each and every one of you to allow me to continue here at Albert Einstein on the path of actualizing the potential of who I am and of who I can become. If I am awarded the opportunity to continue my studies at AECOM, I promise I will not disappoint your faith in me.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Tyberg", with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Michael Tyberg